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AN EXPOSTULATORY
LETTER

To the Reverend

Mr. *WHITEFIELD*,

And the rest of his BRETHREN,

THE METHODISTS

Of the Church of *England*.

WHEREIN

The RITES and CEREMONIES of that Church
are considered; and the Partiality of those
Gentlemen, with Regard to the Practice
of them condemn'd.



L O N D O N

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LETTER

TO THE

MEMBERS

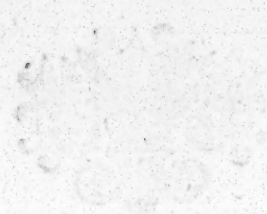
OF THE

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OF THE

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NOTES

ON THE

PROGRESS

OF THE



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EXPOSTULATORY LETTER

To the Reverend

Mr. *WHITEFIELD*.

REVEREND GENTLEMEN,

YOUR zealous Conformity and strict Attachment, in some Points, to the *Doctrines* and *Discipline* of the National *Church* of which You are Ministers, gives occasion to the present Address; presuming that the Opposition you make to *Modern Divinity* and commonly-receiv'd Opinions, proceeds from a steady Integrity and a conscientious Regard to the solemn

Obligations you had laid yourselves under, at your *Ordinations*.

THAT the generality of the *Clergy* of our Day are fallen off from what were usually esteem'd *Fundamental Doctrines* of your *Church*, is beyond dispute; and what they have been charged with of this nature, are Facts plainly proved against them. How they can acquit themselves to GOD, their own *Consciences* and the *World*, from such flagrant Instances of *Prevarication*, as to *subscribe* to the belief of all the *Doctrines* of the *Thirty-nine Articles*, and at the same time *swear* to preach them according to their *verbal* and *literal* Meaning and Construction, and yet never once to do so *with respect to many of them*, but the direct contrary ever afterwards, is to me, I confess, very strange!

Whether a *mental Reservation* will palliate the Crime, and extenuate the Guilt of *false swearing* in the *Clergy*, it seems, is a matter of dispute; but I am strongly inclin'd to believe, that they would account such a way of *trifling* with an *Oath*, in the *Laity*, in *civil Affairs*, to be downright *Perjury*.

'Tis

'Tis, it must be own'd, a very considerable Hardship upon the *Clergy*, to be obliged to *subscribe* and *swear* to the *belief* of such *Doctrines* as they think to be *false*; but this however great numbers of them must do, or *want Bread*; all the amends therefore, that they can make, for this instance of *Dissimulation*, is, thro' the whole Course of their Ministry ever afterwards, honestly to oppose those *Doctrines* and shew them to be *false*, which, for the sake of a *comfortable Maintenance*, they *swore to be true*.

For a *Clergyman* to preach up *false Doctrines* for *True Ones*, for no other Reason but because he was *necessitated to swear* he believed them to be *true*, in view of the Temporary Advantages he had in prospect, when at the same time *he knew in his Conscience they were not true*, would be adding a continued Scene of voluntary Transgressions to the heinous Guilt of *one enormous Crime*, which the prevailing Love of worldly Emoluments betray'd him into: But 'twere uncharitable to suppose, that *worldly Motives* were the only Inducements to such a Conduct; doubtless a Regard to the Interest of *Religion* and *Virtue*, the *Cause* of God,
and

and *Good-will to the Souls of Men*, might direct them thro' this *dark Gate* into a *Sphere* of publick Usefulness. Some perhaps will immediately, upon reading this Apology for the *Clergy*, object the Opinion of *St. Paul* against such as do *Evil* that *Good* may come of it: I won't pretend to obviate this Objection, but leave them to answer it at *another Tribunal*; and shall only observe, that the *Laity* are under infinite Obligations to the *Clergy*, for the hazard they run of losing their own Souls to save theirs. If they truly retain'd a *grateful Sense* of so great a Favour, there would not be that *Irreverence* and Disregard shewn to the *Clergy*, so justly complain'd of.

But thus much shall suffice by way of Preface. I shall now proceed to say a few Words concerning human *Articles* and *Creeds*, which, as they have been for many Ages deem'd sacred, I hope, Gentlemen, you will think worthy of your attention, e'er I *address* myself more particularly to yourselves.

That many of those *obsolete Doctrines* that you are now reviving and *frightning* Mankind with, were the *Doctrines* of *Luther*, *Calvin* and their cotemporary *Reformers*,

mers, must be granted : and though it may be somewhat difficult to account how some of those *absurd Doctrines*, so derogatory to the *divine Attributes*, should be introduced into the *Protestant Church*, as *Doctrines* of the *Gospel* ; yet *Luther* and *Calvin*, having both been *Priests* in the *Church of Rome*, could not be ignorant that the *Doctrine* of *Original Sin* in particular, was a very gainful one ; and therefore, it may be presumed, thought proper to transplant it out of the *Romish Church* into their *New Constitution*. For as the trumping up of this *Notion* at first, brought a vast accession of *Wealth* to the *Clergy* ; so the leaving it out of their *Fundamentals* could not be thought advisable. As soon as this *Doctrine* was foisted in, then 'twas immediately thought necessary, that *Infants* should be *Baptized* ; and the necessity of the Practice, which immediately after it was introduced, in a short time, prevail'd almost universally ; it being built on that mistaken Text, *John iii. 5. Unless a Man be born of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*. Thus this profitable *Scheme* took effect, and all Men brought their *Infants* to

to be *baptized*, in order to wash away the Pollution of *Original Sin*, derived to them by *Adam's Transgression*; for nothing less could allay the superstitious Fears of Men in behalf of their *Children*, having been told by the Priests, that their *Infants*, who were before *Children of Wrath*, were hereby made *Children of God and Heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven*. This *Priestly Expedient* could not fail of glad'ning the Hearts of both *Clergy* and *Laity*, and brought a vast deal of grits to the Mills of the former, which the latter as readily parted with, to save the *Souls* of their *Infants from eternal Damnation*. Before this *Soul-saving Doctrine* was invented in the *Christian Church*, above half the human Race went off the stage of Life, without paying tribute to the *Clergy*: But now there's none go off without a *Priestly Regenerating Passport and Certificate*, unless it be the Offspring of a few *unhallow'd Sectaries*. The Infidel Cant therefore, of that staunch Heretick and Member of the Church of *England*, Mr. *Thomas Chubb*, is doubtless highly worthy of censure, in the opinion of Orthodox Divines, when he says, *That making Infant Christians has been very prejudicial to the Gospel*

Gospel of Christ ; for as by this means, says he, Christianity is become, in a manner, hereditary, descending from Parents to their Children ; so, for a Man once to be a Christian, is to be always a Christian, without his taking any farther thought or care about it. Little did he think surely, that Infant Baptism fixes an indelible Character ; for tho' he seems to be ignorant of it, yet you Gentlemen know very well that there is no falling from Grace ; as an evidence of which, I need only refer to the decent, religious and orderly Behaviour of the Charity-Children within the Bills of Mortality, who, as some of you Gentlemen have justly observed in their behalf, are kept from learning the Vices and bad Examples of wicked People in the Streets.

As the Doctrine of Original Sin, in the Reformers sense of it, is quite repugnant to Reason and Scripture ; for the Scripture says, The Soul that sinneth shall die, the Son shall not bear the Iniquity of the Father, neither shall the Father bear the Iniquity of the Son, Isa. xviii. 20. So are also some others, which I shall but little more than name, most unworthy of the Majesty of Heaven, whose Goodness and tender Mercies

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cies are over all his Works; viz. *The Doctrine of Eternal Election* and the consequent *Doctrine of Reprobation*; *The Doctrine of Divine Assistance* afforded the *Elect*, and the consequent *irremediable* and utterly *abandon'd, unassisted Condition* of the *rest, much the greatest part of Mankind*, who are said to be before *ordain'd and devoted to everlasting Damnation*, in order to display the *sovereign Will and Pleasure of God*, who call'd them into Being on *purpose* for that *end*! *The Doctrine of Justification* by the *imputed Righteousness of Christ*, whereby the *Elect* are considered and accounted *holy and unblameable*, not because of their own *personal moral Righteousness and Goodness*, but because they are hereby supposed to be cover'd with that *Robe of Righteousness* which *Christ* wrought out for them; the *rest, the Non-Elect or Reprobate*, being divested of this Privilege, tho' ever so *righteous, just and good*, are consign'd to *everlasting Destruction*. Thus, the *merciful God*, the greatest and best of *Beings*, is represented as an *arbitrary despotic Tyrant*!

Now, how it were possible for Men professing *serious Religion*, to fall on such a
monstrous

monstrous Hypothesis is hard to be conceived.

“ ’Tis however certain, that this gave the
 “ learned *Jesuits* a great advantage over them,
 “ and put a stop to the *Reformation*, which
 “ otherwise, in all probability, must have
 “ prevail’d universally, had it been put upon
 “ the true foot of *Scripture* and *Reason**.

Perhaps the Reasons which your reverend Brother Mr. *Seagrave* assigns for the *Clergy*’s falling away from the *Doctrines* of the *Reformation*, might be pretty much the same, with respect to *Luther*, *Calvin* and the other *Reformers* of their time, from *Popery*.

“ It is observable, says he, these *old* Principles
 “ are still to be found amongst Dissenters, in
 “ good measure; which, I fear, may be part
 “ of the reason why the *Clergy* have dropt
 “ the use of them, in regard these Doctrines
 “ were the Principles and Language of the
 “ *Dissenters*, and others, who follow’d
 “ the Standard of the *Parliament* against
 “ King CHARLES the First; though they were
 “ not the particular Motives of the War, nor
 “ could contract any just Blame from the
 “ unhappy Issue of that War; yet, at the
 “ *Restoration* of King CHARLES the Second,

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* Moral Philosopher, p. 104.

“ the Resentment which took place against
 “ the Persons of the *Dissenters*, and ran
 “ high, I apprehend, led the Church *Clergy*
 “ not only to be angry with the Men, but
 “ to forsake their *Principles* too, though
 “ right and innocent in themselves, and
 “ afore-time held in common amongst all
 “ Protestants. This appears, in my Opi-
 “ nion, the beginning of Natural Religion
 “ and Moral Preaching. Every thing besides
 “ began to be *branded* with the odious Term
 “ of *Enthusiasm*, and Hypocrisy. Hence
 “ Mankind lost sight of former Principles;
 “ and a *new Plan* of Preaching found ap-
 “ plause from that time to the present *.

Thus, in like manner, the Heats and Ani-
 mosities that were furiously agitated in the
 Debates and Controversies between *Luther*
 and *Calvin* on one side and the *Popish*
Priests on the other, begat in the former
 Hatred and Aversion both to the *Persons*
 and *Principles* of the latter: Insomuch that
 in forming their new *Schemes* and *Plans* of
Doctrine, they seem resolved to keep off
 at the utmost distance possible from those of
 the *Church of Rome*; and rather than fall in
 with

* *Seagrave's Letter to the People of England*, p. 26, 27.

with the old *Hypothesis*, invented a new one of their own, in many things more absurd than even *Popery* itself.

Whereas if they had kept to a Medium, and not have ran to such Extremes, they might certainly have fixed, not only on a truer and more *scriptural*, but also a more *rational System* of Religion.

The next step that was taken, in order to give these *new Doctrines* a *divine Sanction*, was to make the *Scriptures* bend to them, and speak their Sense; then they came forth, seemingly clad with a *sacred Authority*, and soon became established in all *Countries* where the *Reformation* prevail'd, and usurp'd the Stile and Character of *Orthodoxy*; whereupon, an *implicit Faith* in, and *Subscription* to these *infallible Doctrines*, composed and drawn up by *fallible Men*, became a *Test* and *Standard of Truth*.

This I take to be a true, tho' short Account of the *Doctrines* of the *Reformation*, which you *Gentlemen* take so much pains to inculcate. If you sincerely believe them (as I make no doubt you do, since you've not only *subscribed* and *swore* to them, but,

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in the course of your Ministry, take all occasions to inforce them upon the Minds of your Auditors) you are, in my Opinion, to be commended, in as much as they appear to be the *Truths* of the *Gospel* to your Understandings, tho' possibly they have no Foundation in the *Reason* and *Fitness of Things*, or in the *Word of God*.

However, 'tis most certain that every Man, after proper enquiry, ought to follow the *Convictions* of his own *Mind*: I have therefore no difference with you on this score, but from what follows, which was my principal Inducement of writing to you. 'Tis reported of you, *Gentlemen*, that you are as punctual in your Observance of the *cere-monial* and *ritual* Parts of Worship, according to the Direction of the *Rubrick*, as you are with respect to the *Doctrines* of the *Church*; and as a Proof of this, I have been inform'd that some of you (I suppose all of you that are qualified) *christen Children* at the end of the second Lesson at *Evening Prayer*, where the *Godfathers* and *God-mothers*, with the People and Children, are order'd to wait 'till the *Minister* comes to them from the Desk; which being solemniz'd,
he

he returns to the Desk again, and so proceeds 'till the Service is finish'd; and this you do as the *Church directs*, contrary to the common Practice. But whether you are so observant, with regard to the *Celebration of Baptism* in the *Morning*, as the *Rubrick* directs, I know not; and therefore shall say no more on that head, but proceed to consider another thing of much greater moment; *i. e.* your *Mode and Manner of administering this Ordinance*. And here, I'm told, you fail in a *fundamental Point*: for whereas the *Rubrick* says, the *Minister* shall *dip* the *Child* in the *Water* discreetly and warily; and no Exception is made to this Rule, unless the Child is weak, and in consequence supposed to be not able to endure it; nevertheless, you sprinkle *all*, whether they be *healthy* or *sickly*. Thus you *strain at a Gnat and swallow a Camel*, and by a vain, insignificant *Tradition*, render the *Commandment* of our *Lord Jesus Christ*, of none effect. For *sprinkling*, you must needs know, from the Import of the Word in the Original, is not, cannot be *Baptism*, but only *dipping* the *Person* in *Water* in the name of the *Father, Son and Holy Ghost*; this, and only this, is *Baptism*; *dipping* being

being essential in the nature of it. I might here offer some cogent Arguments to prove the Truth and Validity of what I have now asserted, but I fear your *Prejudice* in favour of pre-conceiv'd Opinions will lessen the Weight and Influence of all my Reasonings on this Subject; I therefore choose to quote some *Authorities* relating thereto, which, I believe and hope your Candour and Ingenuity will not suffer you either to *despise* or *dispute*.

The first I shall produce, shall be some Passages out of the New Testament, as justly claiming the Preeminence before any human Testimony.

1. Then went out to *John*, *Jerusalem* and all *Judea*, and all the *Region* round about *Jordan*, and were baptized of him IN JORDAN, confessing their Sins. Mat. iii. 5, 6.

2. Then went out to him all the Land of *Judea*, and they of *Jerusalem*, and were all baptized of him IN THE RIVER OF JORDAN, confessing their Sins. Mark i. 4, 5.

3. And *John* also was baptizing IN ENON near to *Salim*, because there was MUCH WATER there. John iii. 23.

4. *And it came to pass, in those Days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John IN JORDAN; and straitway, COMING UP OUT OF THE WATER, he saw the Heavens opened, and the Spirit like a Dove, descending upon him, &c. Mark i. 9, 10.*

5. *Then cometh JESUS from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him; but John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering, said unto him, Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all Righteousness. Then he suffered him; and Jesus, when he was baptized, went UP STRAITWAY OUT OF THE WATER; and lo! the Heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a Dove, and lighting upon him. Mat. iii. 14, 15, 16.*

To illustrate this, take Dr. *Hammond's* Paraphrase on *Mat. iii. 16*, and *Mark i. 10*.

“ For JESUS, as soon as he was baptized,
 “ went out of the Water, before *John*, and as
 “ soon as ever he came out of the Water (as
 “ he came up from the *River*) he fell down

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“ on

“ on his knees in prayer to his *Father*; (Lu
 “ iii. 12) and whilst he was praying, behold
 “ the Heavens, either really, or after some
 “ remarkable manner of appearance, parted
 “ asunder visibly before Christ, and the *Spi-*
 “ *rit of God* descended upon him, as a *Dove*
 “ descends upon any thing, visibly hovering
 “ and lighting upon him: and *John Baptist*
 “ saw and discern’d what was done.”

6. *And as they (Philip and the Eunuch)*
went on their way, they came unto a certain
Water; and the Eunuch said, See here is
Water: what doth hinder me to be bap-
tized? And he commanded the Chariot to
stand still; and they WENT DOWN BOTH
INTO THE WATER, both Philip and the
Eunuch, and he baptized him; and when
they WERE COME UP OUT OF THE WATER,
the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip,
that the Eunuch saw him no more. Acts viii.
 36, 38, 39.

This shews what Mode of baptizing was
 practised, not only by *John the Baptist*, but
 also by the *Apostles* after they were filled with
 the *Holy Ghost* and had received Power from
 on high: Nor will any other Mode suit with
 the

the *Apostles* Reasonings and Allusions in the following Passages of *Scripture*.

7. *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in Sin that Grace may abound? God forbid: How shall we, who are dead to Sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into JESUS CHRIST, were BAPTIZED INTO HIS DEATH? Therefore we are buried with him by Baptism into Death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead, by the Glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of Life. For if we have been PLANTED together in the LIKENESS OF HIS DEATH, we shall be also in the Likeness of his Resurrection.* Rom. vi. 1—5.

This Passage is very significant and most expressive of the Mode of Baptizing by Immersion: For what is call'd, in one Verse, by the Apostle, *a being baptized into his Death*, is explain'd by *being planted together in the Likeness of his Death, and buried with him by Baptism into Death*. The whole Text plainly shews that the *Apostle* intended hereby to intimate that the *Death, Burial and Resurrection of Christ* were fitly represented by this *PRIMITIVE Mode of Baptism*:

Hence I infer, that in the *Apostles time*, *Sprinkling* or *Aspersión* was not used; wherein nothing of a *Death*, *Burial* or *Resurrection* is or can be represented; but *Immersion* only, which in a lively manner represents his *Descent into the Grave* and *Resurrection out of it*.

8. St. *Paul* says, in allusion to the same Mode, that we are *buried with Christ in Baptism*. Colos. ii. 12.

Very remarkable are also some Passages in the *Church-Catechism*, in favour of *Adult Baptism* and the Mode I'm contending for; where the *Question* is asked*, How many Parts are there in a Sacrament?

Ans. w. Two; the outward and visible Sign, and the inward and spiritual Grace.

Quest. What is the outward and visible Sign or Form in Baptism?

Ans. w. Water, wherein the Person baptized is *dipped*, &c.

Quest. What is the inward and spiritual Grace?

Ans. w. A Death unto Sin, and a new Birth unto Righteousness, &c.

Quest.

* See the Supplement to the Sermons at *Salter's-Hall*, p. 38.

Quest. What is required of Persons to be baptized?

Ans. Repentance, whereby they forsake Sin; and Faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the Promises of God, made to them in that Sacrament.

But the *Church-Governours*, being conscious to themselves that Infants were utterly incapable of Faith and Repentance, they, by a very strange and unaccountable Expedient, surmounted that Difficulty by substituting *Sponsors* or *Sureties*, who voluntarily undertake for and in behalf of the Infant, to *Repent and Believe, Renounce the Devil and all his Works, the Sins, Poms and Vanities of this World, &c.* Which if they did (as I suppose is seldom the case) yet they could not, upon any Principles whatsoever, be of any manner of Use or Advantage to the Infant; for the Voice of *Reason*, as well as the *Sacred Scriptures*, concur in this, that *Religion* and *Virtue* are, and always must be, *personal Things*.

The learned and ingenious Dr. *Wall*, in his elaborate History of *Infant-Baptism*, speaking of the most ancient Rites in Baptism, acknowledges *dipping* to have been ordi-

ordinarily used. “ Their general and ordinary Way, was to baptize by Immersion, or dipping the Person, whether it were an Infant or grown Man or Woman, into the Water. This, he adds, is so plain and clear, by an infinite number of Passages, that, as one cannot but pity the weak Endeavours of such *Pædobaptists* as would maintain the negative of it ; so also we ought to disown and shew a dislike of the profane Scoffs which some People give to the *English Antipædobaptists*, meerly for their using of dipping. ’Tis one thing, to maintain that that Circumstance is not absolutely necessary to the Essence of Baptism ; and another, to go about to represent it as ridiculous and foolish, or as shameful and indecent ; when it was, in all probability, the way by which our *Blessed Saviour*, and for certain was the most usual and ordinary way, by which the ancient Christians did receive their Baptism *.

And again, in another place, where he says ; “ What has been said of the Custom of pouring or sprinkling of Water, in the ordinary use of Baptism, is to be understood “ only

* Vol. II. p. 291.

“ only in reference to these Western Parts
 “ of *Europe*; for it is used ordinarily no
 “ where else. The *Greek Church*, in all
 “ the Branches of it, does still use Immer-
 “ sion; and they hardly count a Child, ex-
 “ cept in case of Sickness, well baptized with-
 “ out it. And so do all other Christians in
 “ the World, except the *Latins*. That
 “ which I hinted before, is a Rule that does
 “ not fail in any Particular that I know of,
 “ viz. All the Nations of Christians, that
 “ do now, or formerly did, submit to the
 “ Authority of the Bishop of *Rome*, do or-
 “ dinarily baptize their Infants by Pouring
 “ or Sprinkling. And tho’ the *English* re-
 “ ceived not this Custom ’till after the decay
 “ of Popery, yet they have since received it
 “ from such neighbour Nations as had be-
 “ gun it in the times of the Pope’s Power:
 “ But all other Christians in the World, who
 “ never owned the Pope’s usurped Power, do
 “ and ever did dip their Infants in the ordina-
 “ ry Use*.

Sir *John Floyer*, in his Essay to restore
 dipping, page 44. “ *Bede* says, that St.
 “ *Austin* baptized ten thousand in the River
Swale

* The Quarto Edition, Part 2. Chap. ix. p. 477.

“ *Swale* on Christmas Day, the coldest time
 “ in our Climate ; this was about six hun-
 “ dred Years after Our Saviour ; and the An-
 “ cients esteem those who were baptized by
 “ Affusion of Water, tho’ upon occasion of
 “ Sickness, to be irregularly baptized, and
 “ they would never admit them into Holy Or-
 “ ders.” And according to Sir *John Floyer*,
 “ King *Edward* the Sixth and Queen *Eli-*
 “ *zabeth* were both baptized by dipping.”

Luther has in several places fully de-
 clared his Opinion in this Matter. Bap-
 tism, saith he, is a *Greek* Word ; it may be
 term’d a Dipping when we dip something
 in Water that it may be wholly cover’d with
 Water. And altho’ that Custom be now al-
 together abolished among the most part, for
 neither do they dip the whole Children, but
 only sprinkle them with a little Water, *they*
ought altogether nevertheless to be dipt, and
 presently to be drawn out again ; for the
Etymology of the Word seems to require
 that.——In another place, he says, Wash-
 ing from Sin, is attributed to Baptism ; it
 is truly indeed attributed, but the Significa-
 tion is softer and flower than that it can ex-
 press Baptism, which is rather a *Sign both of*
Death

Death and Resurrection. Being moved by this Reason, I would have those that are to be baptized, *to be altogether dipt in the Water*, as the Word doth sound, and the Mystery doth signify *.

The Testimonies I have already cited, are, one would think, more than sufficient to prove the Point I am contending for; were it needful, I could produce an almost infinite number from *Pædobaptist Authors* only, without having recourse to any other Reasons or Arguments from the *Baptists* themselves, many of which are absolutely unanswerable.

I shall take the liberty however, to quote a Passage from an *Author* who is a Friend to neither side of the Question; who may therefore be supposed to be impartial. “ I say
 “ (says he) that there is no such thing, now
 “ remaining as Baptism, except among the
 “ *Baptists*, who, upon this account, are
 “ rightly distinguished by that name; since
 “ our *other Churches*, at present, do not
 “ baptize at all. To recount here the De-
 “ fences of our *modern Clergy*, and what
 “ they have said for this new Institution

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“ of

* See Preface to *Crosby's History of the English Baptists*.

“ of their own; and their Method of *dipping*
 “ by *sprinkling* only, might serve to enter-
 “ tain you; but their Reasons and Argu-
 “ ments are so very *weak, idle and ridicu-*
 “ *lous*, that the bare mentioning them must
 “ expose and turn them into a jest. - How
 “ sprinkling or pouring Water upon the
 “ Face can signify or represent the *Death,*
 “ *Burial and Resurrection* of the Person,
 “ is a little hard to conceive. I must own,
 “ that sprinkling or pouring may very aptly
 “ signify and represent the sprinkling the
 “ Conscience with the *Blood of Christ*, or
 “ the Effusion of the Spirit upon the Soul;
 “ but then, it unluckily happens here, that this
 “ was not intended to be signify'd or represent-
 “ ed by Baptism, in the Scripture-Account of
 “ it”. This brings to my mind a pretty Sal-
 vo, invented by a late *Baptist Minister*, who,
 thro' Pique and Resentment, too precipitately
 conform'd to the *Church*; and thereby, I
 fear, offered violence to his Conscience; and
 wounded the Peace of his own Mind.

This Gentleman, well-knowing there can
 be no possible Analogy between *Sprinkling*
 and a *Death, Burial and Resurrection*,
 thinks

* Moral Philosopher, p. 109,

thinks that if Baptism is consider'd as a *Sign*, *the laying down the Child in the Minister's Arms, and then pouring Water on it, in that Posture*, will sufficiently shadow forth a *Death, Burial and Resurrection*: A sillier and more preposterous Conceit, Superstition itself could never inspire! No one surely could imagine it possible, that this Man should arrive to such a pitch of Degeneracy as this, who had ever heard him assert in publick, at the Celebration of the Ordinance of Baptism, that the Advocates for Infant-Baptism were so inconsistent with one another, both with respect to their Mode and Subject of Baptism, that all the Arguments used by some were thought *insufficient* and given up by others; and none so *conclusive* as to unite any two in one Opinion, or Words to the like effect.

And now to return. 'Tis reported, *Gentlemen*, that one of your number, *viz.* Mr. *Stonehouse*, has lately christened or baptiz'd some young People at his Parish of *Islington*, by the usual and allowed Method in the case of weak Infants, to wit, by sprinkling: If this be true, I am, I confess, at a loss how to account for his Conduct in that Affair. Is this Method of acting consistent to that Regard

which you Gentlemen are said to express and shew on all Occasions to the *Articles, Liturgy* and *Rubrick* of your *Church*? Is it not the Intention, nay is it not the express Order in the *Rubrick*, that all that come or are brought to be baptized shall be *dip*t in the Water, except only, in the case of weak Infants? You must pardon my freedom if I expostulate a little with you. How can you answer it to *God* and the *adorable Author of our holy Religion*, whose Ambassadors you would be thought to be, for thus *prostituting* the *holy Ordinance of Baptism*, and substituting in its room an insignificant unavailing thing, neither worthy of *God*, nor beneficial to *Men*? Is this the regard you shew to the *Authority* of the *Church*, whose *Sons* you are? or are you afraid of Reproach and of being stigmatized for being faithful to *God* in the discharge of the Duties of your Function? How can you answer it to your Proselytes, whom in this matter you have imposed upon and deceived? For I appeal to them and you; is not the Order very punctual and express that you shall dip in the Water those whom you baptize, if they are strong enough to bear it? as all generally are,
except

except weak Infants, who were never intended by our *Lord* to be baptized 'Tis, I own, said, that the Minister shall dip or sprinkle in the case of *Adult Baptism*, as well as in that of *Infant Baptism*; but then the restriction must be necessarily the same in both; that as no Infants are to be sprinkled but such only as are supposed incapable of bearing to be *dipped* thro' Weakness or Illness, so no *Adult Person* is allowed to be sprinkled, except he be also thought to be incapable of bearing to be *dipped* on account of Weakness or Illness: otherwise I think the Order can't be understood in any manner agreeable to common Sense.

You are generally esteem'd, by the sober and thinking part of Mankind, to be sincere and in earnest in your Endeavours to promote *serious Religion* and *Godliness* in the World; however you may differ from the Religion of the Day, in Points of *speculative Belief*. If this be your Motive, as I am inclined to believe and hope it is, I wish you all imaginable Success, notwithstanding our different Sentiments in some things. *Christianity* is a Religion honourable to and highly worthy of God, and the most *salutary* and
beneficial

beneficial to good Men throughout every possible Period of their Existence, of any other *Religion* that ever appear'd in the World. How inexpressibly great therefore is the present Honour, and shall be the future Reward of such of the Ministers of this *Gospel of glad Tidings*, who from the unfeigned Devotion of their Hearts, endeavour to spread its *divine Influence* in the World, and to rescue it, both in *Doctrine* and *Discipline*, from all *Corruptions* and *Innovations*?

I take it for granted, *Gentlemen*, that your Views are abstracted from all *sordid* and *sinister Considerations*; otherwise I should never have address'd my self to you in this manner; and that your singular and uncommon Attachment to the Duties of your Function, proceeds from an ardent *Piety to God* and Good-will to the *Souls of Men*. How well therefore, does it become Men embark'd in so glorious a Cause, to use the greatest pains and assiduity to endeavour to restore that *long neglected* and *highly abused Ordinance of Baptism* to its *primitive Purity*, at least as to the *Mode* of it, if not with respect to the Subject. I think you can't, after what has been said,
 .but

but see that 'tis your incumbent Duty, and you have not only the express Word of *God*, but also the Authority of your *Church* to enforce the Practice of it. Not to attempt this, will manifestly shew that you have a greater regard to the *Traditions of Men* than to the *Commandments of God*.

The Work indeed is difficult in this respect, as it will expose you, perhaps, to the *Derision, Scorn* and *Contempt* of the Profane and Irreligious; but I hope you are animated in all pursuits of a religious kind, by a more *glorious* and *heavenly Ambition* than to be moved or intimidated by the *Laughter of Fools*.

There have been, as I suppose you are sensible, great Concessions made by very *Eminent Divines* of your *Church*, in favour of *Believers Baptism* and the *Mode of Immersion*; but what Reformation did such Conviction of Judgment produce in them? Why truly none at all; for they, like *Baalam*, loving the Wages of Unrighteousness, had not the *Courage* and *Resolution* openly to assert their avowed *Principles*; but preferring the Applause of *Men* rather than

than the *Favour* of *God*, retracted or rather prevaricated. Give me leave to produce an Instance to this purpose, of one whose great Learning and diligent Search into Antiquity, are well known; I mean the Reverend Dr. *Barlow* afterwards *Bishop of Lincoln*: This famous Gentleman, before his great Preferments in the *Church* had either bias'd his Opinion or tempted him to conceal it, frankly acknowledged, that both *Scripture* and *Antiquity* were on the side of the Baptists. “ I believe and
 “ know, says he in a Letter to Mr. *Tombs*,
 “ that there is neither *Precept* nor *Ex-*
 “ *ample* in *Scripture* for *Pædobaptism*, nor
 “ any just Evidence for it, for about two
 “ hundred Years after *Christ*. Sure I am,
 “ that in the primitive times they were *Ca-*
 “ *techumeni*, then *Illuminati* or *Bapti-*
 “ *zati*: The truth is, I do believe *Pædo-*
 “ *baptism*, how or by whom I know not,
 “ came into the World in the second Cen-
 “ tury; and in the third and fourth began
 “ to be practised, tho’ not generally, and
 “ defended as lawful, from the Text grossly
 “ misunderstood, *John* iii. 5. Upon the
 “ like gross Mistake of *John* vi. 53. they
 “ did,

“ did, for many Centuries, both in the *Greek*
 “ and *Latin Church*, communicate Infants,
 “ and give them the *Lord's Supper* : And
 “ I confess, says he, they might do both as
 “ well as either *.”

When this Letter was published, and improved by the *Baptists*, the Advocates for Infant-Baptism would not let the Bishop rest 'till he had either denied the Letter, or writ a Recantation. At length Mr. *Wills* extorted a Letter from him, and leave to publish it : In this the Bishop acknowledges his writing as above ; but is so far from proving he was mistaken, or had misrepresented the History of those times, that he does not affirm any such thing ; only tries to excuse himself, by saying that he writ it twenty Years ago, when he talked more and understood less ; and whatever Objections he had against Infant-Baptism, he never disturbed the Peace of the Church, nor declined the Practice †.

Had all Men thus *sneak'd* from the *Profession of Truth*, and basely stifled the Convictions of their own Minds, there never

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would

* *Danvers* Cent. iv. p. 63.

† See Preface to the *History of the English Baptists*, Vol. I.

would have happen'd any Reformation of Religion in the *Christian World*: But *God* be praised, it has not been always thus; *God* has, in the course of his Providence, raised up, almost in every Age, some glorious *Confessors* and *Reformers*, of invincible Virtue and Constancy in their inflexible adherence to the Cause of *God*, and the Interest of Religion, even in the worst, most corrupt and degenerate times; and some with a *Fortitude* superiour to all worldly Terrors, have died in the Defence of what they apprehended to be the Truth.

And now to conclude, if the Hints and Intimations I have given you, Gentlemen, are of any weight with you, so as in any measure to determine your future Conduct, and the Thoughts here suggested, after serious and mature Deliberation, found sufficient to engage your attention, seriously and in the Fear of *God* to examine the Abuses here complained of, more carefully than you seem hitherto to have done; I beseech you, as you tender the awful Account you must all, one Day, give to your *great Lord and Master*, to lay aside all criminal Prejudices,

judices, and *suffer the Word of Exhortation*, tho' in a plain Dress. Let your Regard to the *sacred Word of God*, as well as to the *Authority of your Church*, be exhibited in a conspicuous and consistent Light; and let not the Fear of Men deter you from practising that Discipline, as well as preaching that Doctrine, which you believe in your Consciences to be the Will and Mind of *God*.

'Twould, I'm sensible, be vain in me, to suppose that what I have said or am capable of saying, should have such an Influence as to induce any Person to give the Reasons, offer'd in favour of the Reformation I am contending for, an equitable hearing, who is determin'd in his Principles and Practice of Religion, by the temporary *Gains of Godliness*. But I would hope better things of you, Gentlemen, *and things that accompany Salvation*. Some of you have undergone considerable Fatigues and Inconveniences, in your Attempts to revive the Spirit and Power of Religion in the World; especially the Reverend Mr. *Whitefield*, who, I am inform'd, intends to set out again in a short time for *Georgia*, in order to preach

the *Gospel* there: I would therefore beg leave to address him in particular.

If, Sir, you design to reside in *America* for a Season, and are determin'd to undertake the arduous Work of propagating *Christianity* amongst the neighbouring *Indian Nations*; 'twill then be, I am perswaded, of importance for you to adhere strictly to the *Gospel of Christ*, both as to Doctrine and Discipline; and particularly with regard to the *Initiating Ordinance of Baptism*, 'twou'd be your Wisdom to administer it to your *Heathen Converts* according to the *Primitive Apostolick* manner; *i. e.* to Believers only by *Immersion*. To convince you of this, give me leave to acquaint you with one thing which perhaps you are ignorant of, *viz.* " That when some *Indians* of the
 " *Nantucket Nation*, &c. bordering on
 " *New England*, had embraced *Christianity*, and got the *New Testament* translated into their Language; they were surpriz'd that they found no Directions there
 " to *Baptize Children*, nor any Instance of
 " such a Practice: therefore enquiring of
 " the *English* the ground of Infant-Baptism,
 " and finding neither Precept nor Example
 2 " in

“ in the *Word of God* for it, they rejected it
 “ as an *human Invention* *.”

I am inclined to think, that as the primitive Practice of Baptizing by dipping, enjoined at the Reformation, is now become intirely neglected, and sprinkling substituted in the room of it; you have at present no Conveniencies of Baptizing by Immersion in your Churches. The Fonts which were originally invented and purposely set up in Churches for baptizing of Infants, are not (as I imagine) capacious enough for that purpose: They therefore may *be only look'd upon now, as standing Monuments and Memorials of the Clergy's falling away from the Discipline of their Venerable Mother Church.* Be that as it will, I have no Expedient to propose in the behalf of Baptizing of Infants, they being, as I am fully assured, never intended by *Christ* and his *Apostles* to be baptized; but such only as repent and believe in our *Lord Jesus Christ*, and take on them the solemn and voluntary Profession of devoting themselves to the Worship of *God* through him, with full purpose of Heart. With respect to any such Converts of yours, I have
 this

* See History of the *English Baptists*, p. 118.

this to offer ; That as you have no Conveniency to solemnize and administer this Ordinance with Decency among yourselves, I may venture to promise you, in behalf of several *Baptist Ministers*, that they will do the Work for you to any Person you shall recommend of sober and religious Life and Conversation.

But give me leave to offer one Word of Advice more before I conclude : That in order to your being more properly qualified to celebrate this sacred Ordinance yourselves, according to its first Institution, you ought humbly to submit to it in your own Persons, in imitation of our *Blessed Saviour's* Example, and in obedience to his Advice, that *thus it becomes us to fulfil all Righteousness*. Many Persons, who have afterwards joined in Communion with your Church (wherein they had been brought up) being dissatisfied with their Infant-Baptism, have not disdain'd to be baptized by our Ministers. I hope therefore, you'll not condemn a friendly Offer, but consider that as your not complying with my advice would be of no personal Disservice to me, so your embracing of it would be of singular Service and Advantage to yourselves ; inasmuch as it would demonstrate

strate your Love of Truth and your Readiness
to act agreeably to the Conviction of your
own Minds in all things however unpopular.
And now, Gentlemen, having dispatch'd all I
had to say to you of any importance, I recom-
mend what I have said to your most serious
Consideration ; and remain,

GENTLEMEN,

Your Sincere Well-Wisher

and most Humble Servant,

E. B.



1837
I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 10th inst. in relation to the Commission of your son, Mr. J. H. Smith, to the office of Justice of the Peace for the County of Adams, and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities for their consideration. And now, Gentlemen, having signed all I have to do for or on my part, I remain, Sir, your obedient servant.

Yours truly,
J. H. Smith

Very respectfully,
J. H. Smith

and my family

E. B.

